What is Claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method of matching an offer for a product with a supplier, comprising:

receiving the offer from a customer machine;

5   obtaining at least one quote for the product from each of a plurality of suppliers and obtaining at least two quotes from one supplier in the plurality of suppliers, a first quote from the one supplier being lower than a second quote from the one supplier;

10   identifying a qualifying quote for the product from each of the quotes obtained from the plurality of suppliers;

comparing the qualifying quotes from each of the quotes obtained to identify a most-preferential quote of the qualifying quotes;

15   if the offer exceeds the most-preferential quote, matching the offer with the supplier corresponding to the most-preferential quote; and

evaluating any other quotes provided by the supplier corresponding to the most-preferential quote.

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2. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the offer includes a price and a description of the product.

3. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein
25 product is a travel service.

4.   The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein, in case
the one quote is the most-preferential quote, evaluating any
other quotes comprises satisfying the offer with the second quote
from the one supplier.

5.   The computer-implemented method of claim 4, wherein the one
quote is the lowest quote made by the one supplier.

6.   The computer-implemented method of claim 4, further
comprising negotiating a purchase of the product from the
supplier corresponding to the most-preferential quote.

7.   The computer-implemented method of claim 6, wherein
negotiating the purchase of the product from the supplier
includes making a reservation for a travel service provided by
the supplier at a value corresponding to the second quote.

8.   The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein
comparing the qualifying quotes from each of the quotes obtained
includes calculating a value above which a particular quote is
not economically viable and excluding quotes above the calculated
value.

9.   A computer-readable medium having computer-executable

instructions, comprising:

receiving from a customer machine an offer representing a

value that the customer is willing to exchange for a product;

5   receiving a set of quotes from each of a plurality of

suppliers to provide the product, and receiving at least two

quotes from one supplier in the plurality of suppliers, a first

quote from the one supplier being lower than a second quote from

the one supplier;

10   ranking each supplier in the plurality of suppliers

according to the value of at least one quote in the set of quotes

received from each supplier;

selecting a highest ranked supplier from the plurality of

suppliers;

15   matching the offer from the customer with the highest ranked

supplier; and

evaluating any other quotes provided by the supplier

corresponding to the most-preferential quote.

20   10.   The computer-readable medium of claim 9, wherein the value

of the one quote includes a price for the product.

11.   The computer-readable medium of claim 10, wherein the value

of the one quote includes a quality rating associated with the

25   product quoted by the supplier.

12. The computer-readable medium of claim 9, wherein the value of the one quote includes a quality rating associated with the product quoted by the supplier.

13. The computer-readable medium of claim 9, wherein, in case the one quote is the most-preferential quote, satisfying the offer with the second quote from the one supplier.

14. The computer-readable medium of claim 9, wherein the product includes a characteristic having a rating, the offer identifying an acceptable rating value and wherein the quote received from a each supplier identifies the rating of the product being quoted by that supplier.

15. The computer-readable medium of claim 14, wherein the product includes a travel service and the characteristic includes a quality of the travel service.

16. A computer-implemented method for matching an offer for a product with a supplier, comprising:

receiving the offer from a customer machine, the offer identifying a price and a minimum acceptable quality for the

5 product;

calculating a first value based on the offer that reflects a desired margin;

obtaining at least one quote for the product from each of a plurality of suppliers, each quote identifying a price for the

10 product that the corresponding supplier is ready to accept, each product having a rating for the quality of the product being quoted by the corresponding supplier;

selecting one quote from each of the suppliers;

for those suppliers for which the one quote provided is

15 below the second value, ranking those suppliers based on the rating associated with the product being quoted by the supplier; and

selecting a most preferentially-ranked supplier as the match for the offer.

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17. The computer-implemented method of claim 16, further comprising:

calculating a second value, based on the offer, above which a quote for the product is not economically desirable; and

for those suppliers for which the one quote provided is between the first value and the second value, ranking those suppliers based on the cost associated with the corresponding quote.

18. The computer-implemented method of claim 16, wherein obtaining at least one quote includes obtaining at least two quotes from one supplier in the plurality of suppliers, a first quote from the one supplier being lower than a second quote from the one supplier; and, in case the one quote is the most-preferential quote, satisfying the offer with the second quote from the one supplier.

19. The computer-implemented method of claim 16, wherein quotes having higher ratings are ranked at a higher level of preference.

20. The computer-implemented method of claim 19, wherein quotes having the same ratings are ranked in descending order of preference according to the cost associated with each quote.

21. The computer-implemented method of claim 17, further comprising selecting a quote provided by the most preferentially-ranked supplier as the quote that satisfies the offer.

22. The computer-implemented method of claim 21, wherein the quote that satisfies the offer comprises the lowest quote provided by the most preferentially-ranked supplier.

5   23. The computer-implemented method of claim 21, wherein the quote that satisfies the offer comprises a quote provided by the most preferentially-ranked supplier other than the lowest quote provided.

10   24. The computer-implemented method of claim 23, wherein the quote that satisfies the offer comprises the highest quote provided by the most preferentially-ranked supplier.

25. The computer-implemented method of claim 23, wherein the quote that satisfies the offer comprises the highest quote provided by the most preferentially-ranked supplier that is still below the first value.

26. A computer-readable medium having computer executable instructions, comprising:

receiving an offer from a customer for a product, the product being subject to a criterion;

calculating a first value, based on the offer, above which a quote for the product is not economically desirable;

calculating a second value based on the offer that reflects a desired margin;

obtaining from a plurality of suppliers at least one quote for the product, each quote including a price at which the corresponding supplier is prepared to provide the product and including a rating associated with the criterion of the particular product quoted by the corresponding supplier;

discarding from the plurality of suppliers those suppliers that do not provide a quote below the first value;

for those suppliers for which the one quote falls between the first value and the second value, ranking each supplier in the plurality of suppliers based on one quote provided by the suppliers, wherein the suppliers are ranked based on the price associated with the one quote provided by the suppliers;

for those suppliers for which the one quote falls below the second value, ranking each supplier based on the one quote provided, wherein the suppliers are ranked based upon the criterion; and

matching the offer with a most-preferentially ranked

supplier.

27. The computer-readable medium of claim 26, further comprising

5 negotiating a purchase of the product by the customer from the

most-preferentially ranked supplier.

28. The computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the first

value corresponds to the value of the offer adjusted for

10 transactional costs associated with a purchase of the product.

29. The computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the second

value corresponds to the value of the offer adjusted for

transactional costs associated with a purchase of the product

15 plus a desired profit.

30. The computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the

criterion is a quality of the product quoted by a particular

supplier.

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31. The computer-readable medium of claim 26, further

comprising:

for those suppliers for which the one quote provided is

below the second value, ranking those suppliers based first on

25 the rating associated with the product being quoted by the

supplier and based second on the price associated with the
product.

32. A computer system for satisfying offers with quotes,

5   comprising:

an electronic travel agent, including:

a web server component configured to interface with a
customer machine over a network connection and receive from the
customer machine an offer for a product, the offer identifying a

10   price for the product and a minimum quality rating for the
product;

a travel server component configured to obtain from
each supplier in a plurality of suppliers, at least one quote to
provide the product at a price and at a particular quality

15   rating;

a sorter component configured to rank the suppliers
according to one quote provided by each of the plurality of
suppliers with preferential rankings being awarded based on the
quality rating associated with the corresponding quote; and

20   the electronic travel agent being further configured to
match the offer with a most-preferentially ranked supplier and to
negotiate a purchase of the product from the most preferentially-
ranked supplier.

33. The computer system of claim 32, wherein the sorter component is further configured to rank the suppliers based first on the quality rating associated with the corresponding quote and second on the price associated with the corresponding quote.

34. The computer system of claim 32, wherein the electronic travel agent is further configured to negotiate a purchase of the product from the most preferentially-ranked supplier at a higher price than the price associated with the one quote provided by the most preferentially-ranked supplier.

35. The computer system of claim 34, wherein the higher price is the price associated with another quote provided by the most preferentially-ranked supplier.

36. The computer system of claim 32, wherein the sorter component is further configured to calculate a value, based on the offer, above which it is economically practical to match the offer with a supplier.

37. The computer system of claim 36, wherein the sorter component is further configured to discard those suppliers that do not provide a quote below the calculated value.